

Questions & Responses

Q1. Has the Navy reviewed the GAO's findings and is there a statement you can provide about that process?

A1. The Navy provided detailed responses directly to the GAO, and those responses are included within the GAO report. The Navy concurred with GAO's four recommendations, outlined the methodology by which GAO recommendations are being implemented, highlighted key material contained within report footnotes, and provided supplemental material as required.

- Since 2017, the Navy has made a several changes to enhance Surface Warfare Officer (SWO) ship-driving training and has concrete funding for additional improvements. These changes include a threefold increase in the number of initial mariner skills (i.e., ship-driving) training hours for SWOs by 2021. In addition, the Navy added classroom and simulator time to existing training courses to improve mariner skills. Also in fiscal year 2021, the Navy's current four-week Junior Officer of the Deck (JOOD) course will transition to a six-week Officer of the Deck (OOD) Phase 1 course and a three-week OOD Phase 2 course will be added.
- The Navy is committed to the development, assessment, and sustainment of mariner skills proficiency for individual Sailors and watch teams. Specifically, the Navy designed and is building Mariner Skills Training Centers (MSTCs) in Norfolk and San Diego that consolidate critical navigation, seamanship, and shiphandling training for Sailors and watchteams into one facility. Each facility will house 30 COVE III / NSST-2 simulators for individual training during the Surface Warfare Officer School courses, as well as a number of Integrated Navigation Seamanship and Ship handling Trainers (I-NSSTs), ranging in size from small Conning Officer Trainers to large-scale Integrated Navigation Team Trainers, to support both individual, team and unit training. MSTCs will also provide a wide variety of instructional courses, including the OOD courses; Radar Observer, Automated Radar Plotting Aid (ARPA) and ECDIS-N radar training; and Bridge Resources Management (BRM) mentoring workshops.

Q2. Has (or will) each of these recommendations from the GAO been implemented? If so, when and how were they implemented? If they were not or won't be implemented, why not?

A2. The Navy's means of accomplishing each of the four GAO recommendations are described in detail within the Navy responses. The Navy is committed to manning, training, and equipping a Surface Force that is second to none, operates safely, controls the seas, and provides the Nation with combat naval power when and where needed.

Q3. Are there any other changes the Navy has made to improve the changes to SWO training that weren't covered in this report that you'd like to highlight?

A3. Positive results are emerging from the numerous improvements to Surface Warfare Officer (SWO) mariner skills training and assessment.

- Student performance on JOOD Course Navigation, mariner skills assessments – reflect vast improvements compared to that overserved during 2018 fleet-wide OOD Competency Checks.
- 2018 OOD Competency Checks spanned a random sampling of 164 OOD-qualified junior officers across the world-wide Fleet Concentration Areas. JOOD Course students are newly commissioned officers with no prior shipboard experience. Based upon the depth of JOOD Course training, the quantity of simulator repetitions involving all types of mariner skills scenarios (including high-density shipping traffic and in-extremis maneuvering), and close student/instructor interaction, inexperienced JOOD Course students are performing as well or better than the OOD-qualified officers tested in 2018. Specifically, the number of recent JOOD Course students who completed the mariner skills assessment with “No Concerns” increased by 5%. Those completing the mariner skills assessment with “Some Concerns” held steady, but those showing “Significant Concerns” decreased by 15%. Based on the 01 November JOOD Course data, in totality, the 320 JOOD Course graduates have been exposed to challenging applications of Rules of the Road and shiphandling decisions within challenging traffic management scenarios.
- Approximately 1,100 cumulative JOOD Course graduates are expected annually across three JOOD Course sites (Norfolk, San Diego, and Newport).
- The JOOD Course mariner skills competency check is one of ten planned mariner skills milestone assessments that define the SWO training and assessment continuum, as revised in 2018. These ten assessments, evaluations, and competency checks span all career milestones, and include four Go/No-Go assessments that determine eligibility for follow-on milestones. Additionally, Fleet OOD Competency Checks planned for 2020, will provide direct comparative data relative to the 2018 OOD Competency Checks.
- The Navy will continue to use the results of NSS milestone assessments coupled with strong qualitative student and Commanding Officer feedback regarding the quality and depth of classroom, simulator, and at-sea training as the basis for SWO training and assessment improvements.
- Concurrent initiatives provide additional means of enhancing mariner skills proficiency development, assessment, and sustainment at both individual and watch team levels. These include: Navigation, Seamanship, and Shiphandling Trainer (NSST) improvements (including integrated Bridge and Combat Information Center (CIC) capabilities); more challenging Mobility-Navigation (MOB-N) and Mobility-Seamanship (MOB-S) training and certification criteria; and Bridge Resource Management Workshops (BRMWs) leveraging the expertise of Strategic Sealift Officer and post-Major Command SWOs.

Closer look at the numbers:

- In Summer 2019, the Navy implemented the Junior Officer of the Deck (JOOD) course for newly commissioned Ensigns.
 - As of NOV 19, 320 JOOD graduates existed across the Fleet. These officers completed a Mariner Skills Assessment (OOD Competency Check) prior to departing the course.

- o This exam encompasses various ship-handling scenarios including high-density shipping and in-extremis maneuvering. Results of this "OOD level" assessment are as follows:
 - Total Assessments = 320
 - No Concerns = 66 (21%)
 - Some Concerns = 244 (76%)
 - Significant Concerns = 10 (3%)
- o This is an improvement over the 2018 OOD Competency Check baseline results that follow:
 - Total Assessed = 164
 - No Concerns = 27 (16%)
 - Some Concerns = 108 (66%)
 - Significant Concerns = 29 (18%)

Additional Talking Points/Fact Sheet

- As part of the JOOD Course, students who demonstrate "Significant Concerns" on their Mariner Skills Assessment are afforded extensive remediation to correct skill deficiencies before re-taking this examination. The instruction and rigor of this process, coupled with the quantity of simulator repetitions to which JOOD Course students are exposed, facilitates the vast majority of students who experienced difficulty during their initial Mariners Skills Assessment improving their skills and performance during re-examination.
- The final JOOD graduation numbers are significant. Out of 320 students, 310 or 97% of the total number of graduates completed a Fleet OOD Competency Check with either "No Concerns" or "Some Concerns." Most significantly, it must be understood that JOOD Course students "BEAR NO SHIP EXPERIENCE." Compared with the 2018 Fleet OOD Competency Check data, JOOD graduates are performing as well as or better than their fleet counterparts who have OOD Qualification and between one and two years of at-sea experience in the application of Rules of the Road in traffic management scenarios.
- Key data from other NSS milestone evaluations is as follows. This data attests to Surface Community commitment to ensuring an NSS proficiency quality cut at all milestones:
 - o Command Assessment (Shiphandling Portion) --- Go/No Go --- Data as of 22 OCT 19
 - Total Assessments = 1,477
 - First Pass = 69% (1,021)
 - Overall Pass = 81% (1,197)
 - Note: This important assessment has been in place since 2013.
 - o Prospective Commanding Officer --- Go/No Go --- Data as of 11 OCT 19
 - Total Assessments = 161
 - First Pass = 60% (97)
 - Overall Pass = 96% (154)
 - o Major Command --- Go/ No Go --- Data as of 03 SEP 19

- Total Assessments = 30 First Pass = 37% (11)
- Overall Pass = 93% (28)